The Beginning of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society

In December, I began working as a law clerk for Justice Joseph A. Boyd. He soon involved me with his writing of a history of all the justices of the Florida Supreme Court. On November 3, 1980, Justice Boyd and I visited Justice Ben T. Overton. He told us that the paperwork for a non-profit organization called the Florida Supreme Court Foundation had been set but had not gotten around to having a meeting. He suggested we contact the executive director Nancy Dobson who was the wife of FSU College professor Jack T. Dobson and previous executive director of the Historic Tallahassee Preservation Board.

I told Ms. Dobson that Justice Boyd and I were working on a history of the Florida Supreme Court and informed her that we had tape-recorded conversations with former Justice B.K. Roberts and retired circuit court Judge Taylor. Ms. Dobson contacted Idella Moore with the Department of Archives who organized interviewers for Governor Robert ("Bob") Graham's "Oral History Night in Honor of Justice Glenn Terrell," which was held Tuesday evening May 18, 1982.

At that that event Ditti Davis, law clerk for Justice Alderman, introduced me to Justice Robert M. Ervin. I told him about the history Justice Boyd and I were working on and he told me several anecdotes.

Justice Alderman became the Chief Justice on July 1, 1982. At a conference with the Justices, Justice Alderman announced he was interested in appointing Justice Boyd to a Florida Supreme Court Committee and asked Justice Overton about the status of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Foundation. When Justice Overton explained it had not yet met, Justice Sundberg asked if it had gotten a tax-exempt number yet. Justice Overton said no.

After Justice Boyd told me about this situation, I checked out the Secretary of State's corporate records and discovered that the organization had been incorporated on October 19, 1977. The registered agent was the Clerk of the Florida Supreme Court Sid J. White. The officers and directors were listed as:

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HALL, M. LEWIS JR
150 SE SECOND AVE, SUITE 1400
MIAMI, FL 33131

VT
COBB, JAMES E
1609 GULF LIFE TOWER
JACKSONVILLE FL 32202

TT
VARN, WILFRED C
305 SOUTH GADSDEN
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32207

T
HULSEY, MARK
1800 FIRST UNION TOWER
JACSONVILLE FL 32202

ST
MCDONDALD, RUTH
2133 MILLERS LANDING ROAD
TALLAHASSEE FL 32312

CT
ERVIN, ROBERT M.
305 S. GADSDEN
TALLAHASSEE FL 32301

I contacted the treasurer Wilfred Varn's office and picked up the file. Though the organization had been incorporated, it had not yet filed for tax exempt status. I prepared and filed with IRS the application for tax-exempt status.

On Friday February 26, 1983, I attended what was described as an organizational meeting. Delphene Strickland, a former research assistant for Justice Glenn Terrell and spouse of Thomas V. Strickland, spent a lot of time expressing her ideas of holding a First Annual Dinner honoring Justice Terrel. Beth Adkins, the wife of Justice James C. Adkins, stated that the first thing they should do was schedule an annual meeting and prepare an agenda. After much discussion a consensus was reached that the annual meeting should be on May 2, which would coincide with Law Week.

I was made temporary treasurer. Several people wrote out and gave me checks for their membership fees. The major purpose was to pay for refreshments at the annual meeting. At my suggestion, we scheduled a follow up meeting for March 21, to plan an agenda for the annual meeting.

At the second organizational meeting on March 21, the attendees agreed to reduce membership fees from $25 to $10. At my suggestion, we agreed to an agenda which would include the election of a board of trustees.

I was out of town and missed the May 2 annual meeting. I was told that a lot of people showed up but only twenty-two people signed up as members. All the Supreme Court Justices and their wives (except Justice Leander Shaw) attended. There was an election of board of trustees, which in turn elected Delphene Strickland as President.

On Thursday July 21, 1983, there was a cover dish supper and meeting of the trustees for the Florida Supreme Court Historical Foundation, at which (except for Justice Adkins and his wife Beth Adkins) all the Florida Supreme Court Justices and their spouses attended.

(During the first week of October 1983, someone from The Florida Bar called me and said that reprints of the History of the Florida Supreme Court Justice Boyd and I had submitted to the University of Miami Law Review were ready. They delivered 2,000 copies to my office.)

The next quarterly meeting was held at the Brokaw McDougal House on October 17, 1983. Justice Ervin showed up for the first time. After the meeting, Justice Ervin came up to me and thanked me for the good job I was doing. He asked me for some stationery so that he could write to some of his friends. Two days later, his secretary called me and said had over three hundred people he planned on writing.

The next annual meeting was scheduled for February 17, 1984. At the time I was keeping a journal and described the 1st Annual Dinner thusly:

Saturday, Feb. 18, 1984

> Last night the Fla. Supreme Ct. Hist. Soc. Held its 1st Annual Dinner. It was a smashing success.
>
> Ray Reynolds + Leann Fiveash did most of the planning. Leanne made arrangements with Andrew's 2nd Act to do the catering, and Ray Reynold was supposed to do the programming. However, C.J. Alderman, Ditti Davis, + Nancy Dobson became quite concerned this week when they found out that Ray had not lined up any speakers nor had a printed program. I met with Nancy, Brian Polley, Ditti + Pat Reed in Ditti's office Wednesday afternoon. Nancy had an idea for a printed program that would include a menu of a dinner Jefferson Browne gave for an incoming governor. Pat called Leham + found out what the meal

was going to be. We decided to get in touch with Ray before preparing a program.

Ray came over Thurs. morning + met with us. He said he thought the dinner should be just a social affair + and that since nobody had agreed to speak, there was no need for a program. He said he didn't mind if we did one though. Nancy said it was imperative that there be some kind of program, so we decided that Frank Graham would give a few remarks about the society and that C.J. Alderman would call on the former justices give a few words.

Friday afternoon I met with the acquisitions committee, which met in the Brokaw McDougal House. John Parkhill House. John Parkhill, Justice Parkhill's youngest son, had driven up from Tampa was present + taped some recollections of his father. Later I helped Brian move photographs + paintings to be displayed in the Senate Chambers.

I arrived a few minutes after seven. Pat Reed had bought some name tags which C.J. Alderman and Frank Graham was a good idea, but which Ray + I did not like.

A film of Gov. Catts' inauguration was shown in the old Supreme Ct. chambers. All seven justices + and their wives showed up. Former justices O'Connell, Carlton, Roberts, Hatchett, Sundberg + Ervin were also there. A photo was taken of them all.

Shortly afterwards I asked Justice Carlton about 'it + he seemed a bit irritated. He complained they didn't have their act together + kept delaying until O'Connell threatened to leave. He said that O'Connell had to catch an 8 o'clock flight + and that it was twenty minutes till. So they quickly snapped a photo.

For the most part, I found myself disliking Carlton. I found him to be somewhat arrogant.

Justice Roberts was also somewhat aloof. I was slightly offended when he did not thank me for xeroxing (at his request) he had written about the Fla. Su. Ct.

I did enjoy talking with Justices Ervin, Judge Shivers + especially Judge Zehmer + his wife, who have only recently moved to Tallahassee.

I sat at a table with the curator Pat Whitman + Robert Scott, Justice and Mrs. Ehrlich and Judge + Mrs. Zehmer.

After the salad C.J. Alderman introduced all the present justices. When he mentioned that J. Adkins was an aide to the Court in 1939, J. Boyd yelled out, “You mean 1839.”

After the main course, Alderman asked the former justices to come up + say a few words. J. Roberts was first + gave several amusing anecdotes. It seemed a bit long, but largely because they had not begun serving dinner until after 8:30 + and it was already past 9. He spoke while dessert was being served, + several people began picking at their carrot cake before he finished.

Justices Ervin, Hatchett + Carlton gave much shorter speeches.

Justices O-Connel + Sundberg did not address the crowd as they already left.